

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: MUNICIPAL SHARED SERVICES

DATE: JULY 28, 2006

Members Present:

Supervisors O'Connor
Mason
VanNess
Sheehan

Roy Akins, City of Glens Falls Mayor
John Diamond, City of Glens Falls Common Council
Member-at-Large
William Thomas, Chairman
JoAnne McKinstry, Confidential Secretary to the
Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal
Services
Joan Sady, Clerk
Maury Thompson, *The Post-Star*
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

Mr. O'Connor, as Chairman of the Committee, observed there were several new people in attendance today. He welcomed Supervisor Sheehan, as a new Committee member; Roy Akins, the new Mayor for the City of Glens Falls Mayor; and John Diamond, the new Councilman-at-Large for the City.

Mrs. McKinstry entered the meeting at 2:38 p.m.

Mr. O'Connor explained he would like to begin the meeting with a brief outline of his understanding of the Committee's purpose, or mission, as follows:

Mayor Regan had attended several Board of Supervisors' meetings where he discussed the Dispatch Services for the City Police Department.

Chairman Thomas formed a special Municipal Shared Services Committee to provide the proper format for the exchange of dialogue, ideas, suggestions, etc. (January 2004).

The meetings were scheduled at the request of Mayor Regan, when he had issues to be discussed.

Meeting attendance varied between City Council Members, McDevitt, Taylor, and Saunders; Police Chief Carey, Sheriff Cleveland, and various Town of Queensbury Supervisors.

Discussions focused around the consolidation of the City Police Departments Dispatcher's Desk with the County's Sheriff's Office Dispatcher's Unit.

In January of 2005 the Committee membership was increased to include a Queensbury County Supervisor.

Frequency of meetings waned to virtually no meetings in 2005.

Mr. O'Connor commented that the Town of Queensbury Supervisors have expressed an interest in exploring different ways the City and Town may be able to benefit each other by sharing some services. He stated, to the best of his knowledge, the City and Town had never discussed such concepts during the Municipal Shared Services

Committee meetings.

Mr. O'Connor said he felt the mission of the Committee was to listen to the City's comments/suggestions and report back to the full Board of Supervisors. However, he pointed out, the City representatives could approach the Warren County Board of Supervisors through two different options:

1. Via the Committee Meeting format; or
2. Via the full Board of Supervisors Meeting, during the public comment period.

Continuing, Mr. O'Connor mentioned a recent article in *The Post-Star* carried the headline "Warren County may take over the Glens Falls Civic Center by January 1st ." He said he had immediately spoken with the reporter, Maury Thompson, and learned the reporters do NOT write the headlines.

Mr. O'Connor declared that Warren County will never, ever, become the owner/operator of the Civic Center. He said he felt it was important to stress that point, immediately. What may be a possibility, he stated, was for the Sports Authority to establish the mechanics to assume the responsibilities thereof. Even though the New York State Legislature had not passed the necessary legislation by the end of its First Term, he commented the Warren County Supervisors remained confident the NYS Legislature would approve the Bill in September.

Mr. O'Connor clarified the purpose of today's meeting was to provide a formal structure for comments and questions regarding the management of the East Field Recreational Park. He said he felt it would be best for all parties, if the discussions were out in the open. He further declared this was an open meeting, the general public was welcome, and he acknowledged the press was also in attendance.

Mr. Mason said it was his understanding the County had offered its support of East Field with the appropriation of \$150,000 over the past 3 years.

Mr. Sheehan commented the County Supervisors had also felt the future management of East Field could also include the Town of Queensbury.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Diamond, who reported the City's Common Council had originally been in favor of the County being involved with the management of East Field. He further acknowledged the County's financial support in the past few years. He said he felt it was unfortunate the focus shifted away from East Field during Mayor Regan's last year in office. However, he confirmed the City's interest had been rejuvenated and he welcomed today's discussion.

Mr. Diamond pointed out the City of Glens Falls felt that East Field carried a strong regional impact that could benefit the whole of Warren County. Unfortunately, he noted, the City has not had the disposable funds to invest in the general maintenance of East Field. Therefore, he pointed out the facilities had deteriorated to the very serious conditions, that could no longer be ignored.

Mr. O'Connor stressed the County had made it very clear to the prior City Administration that any decisions on shared services would need to be made by the City's Common Council.

Mr. O'Connor queried if Messrs. Diamond and Akins felt the City could continue to maintain East Field until after the Sports Authority was resolved.

Mr. Diamond explained the City was in need of the County's assistance immediately, to be certain the bleachers were ready for the 2006 Football Season of both the Glens Falls High School teams and the Green Jackets Football Club. If the City waited until the Authority was up and running, he said he felt it would be too late for the Football Teams to utilize the field this season.

Mr. VanNess stated that due to budgetary constraints, the County was not in a position to assume the responsibilities for East Field in 2006. However, he said he felt, this was the perfect time of year to discuss the 2007 season, since the County was just beginning the 2007 Budget process.

Mr. VanNess concurred with Mr. Mason's earlier comments that the County had appropriated \$150,000 to the City to cover some of the care and maintenance at East Field. He said it was his understanding the County had not yet received the quarterly report on how the money had been used for East Field.

Mr. VanNess, as a Town of Queensbury Supervisor, declared his personal support for East Field as an asset for the whole of Warren County. He acknowledged there were a number of questions not yet resolved, regarding the Sports Authority and what it would encompass. In addition, he expressed his concerns as to what the County could do for the City at this point in 2006.

Following a brief discussion, Mr. VanNess suggested the County may be able to entertain a request for assistance with conservative repairs on the bleachers at East Field for the upcoming Football Season.

Mr. Diamond acknowledged Mr. VanNess's earlier comment regarding the quarterly reports from the City. He commended Mayor Akins for his diligent work on straightening up the paperwork. He said he was confident the quarterly reports would be submitted more timely from here on.

Messrs. O'Connor and VanNess concurred that Mayor Akins' diligence and attention to detail was greatly appreciated at the County level.

Mr. O'Connor queried if Mayor Akins had an estimated cost for the most conservative bleacher repairs that could be done immediately. Mayor Akins said it was his understanding that some of the metal structures were also in need of repair, and not just the wooden boards.

Mayor Akins reminded the Committee members that several years ago, he had served

as the Warren County Tourism Director. He noted he had been an avid supporter of shared services for a very long time. He encouraged all in attendance to continue working together and promote the entire Warren County area, along with the surrounding communities in Saratoga and Washington Counties.

Mayor Akins pointed out the County first pledged its financial support of the Civic Center as early as 1978-79, in the amount of \$100,000. He expressed his appreciation to the County for the continued support, although he stated the same \$100,000 does not provide the same level of assistance that it did in 1978-79.

As for the \$50,000 designated for East Field, Mayor Akins once again expressed his appreciation for the County's financial support. He said he felt the money was needed for the maintenance, since the landscaping maintenance budget, alone, came to \$70,000 per year. In addition, he mentioned the recreational facility had grown, over the years, and was actually comprised of three different components: the Stadium Piece, the Little League Piece and the Recreational Park and swimming facilities.

Mr. O'Connor observed that Chairman Thomas was in attendance today and he deferred the financial question to Mr. Thomas. Mr. Thomas queried what the repairs were estimated at, and could the repairs be broken down into immediate and long range. Mayor Akins responded the full repairs had been estimated at \$650,000 and a bare minimum estimate was not immediately available.

Mayor Akins pointed out that Senator Little had been instrumental in securing grant funds for both Lake Placid and Saratoga County. He said he felt Warren County could also develop a sports-related proposal that would also qualify for such support. He acknowledged the County was currently working on developing a Sports Authority and convention center in the Town/Village of Lake George. He said it would be difficult for him to support such a program, if the Glens Falls Civic Center were not included in the package. He encouraged the Committee to develop a community approach and market the entire region, with its many facets, from the Gore Mountain Ski Center to Cooper's Cave and everything in between. He suggested, with the proper facilities and marketing approach, the area could attract large events such as the Empire State Games, or Special Olympics Games.

Mr. VanNess expressed his appreciation for the joint attitude the Mayor and Mr. Diamond had presented at today's meeting. He acknowledged the City of Glens Falls Fire Department served as the lead agency for emergency responders. He said he felt the City's paid fire department was providing a valuable asset to the entire region.

Discussion returned to the East Field bleacher conditions and the badly needed repairs.

Mr. VanNess queried whether or not the City could obtain a "bare minimum" estimate for the repairs to get East Field through the 2006 Football Season. He suggested such an estimate could be presented to the Finance Committee for its review and comment.

Mayor Akins said he would need to review the quotation closely and report back to the Committee. He clarified the estimate had included both the baseball and football

portions of the stadium area and he would need to separate those costs.

Mr. Thomas explained that he felt the anticipated Sports Authority would certainly be entitled to undertake the necessary capital improvements for each of the venues within its responsibility. He said the East Field repairs seemed as though it would qualify if East Field was under the Sports Authority's umbrella (so to speak).

As an alternative to the Sports Authority, Mr. O'Connor queried whether or not the Warren County Parks and Recreation Department would be able to assist with the East Field maintenance.

Mr. Thomas explained the Parks and Recreation Department had evolved into the Parks, Recreation and Railroad Division (P,R&RR), with an expanded realm of responsibilities. In addition, he said, he felt East Field would fit better into the Sports Authority's anticipated realm. For the P,R&RR to assume East Field's maintenance, he suspected the County would also need to expand its budget and staff.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Thomas acknowledged that Mr. O'Connor's suggestion to bring East Field into the P,R&RR would certainly be a quicker solution than the Sports Authority. He pointed out the Sports Authority still had a long list of issues in front of it before it would be (if ever) "up and running."

Mr. O'Connor pointed out that the P R & RR Division could be a temporary solution for East Field, until the Sports Authority became a reality. He echoed Mr. VanNess' earlier suggestion for a "band-aid" type of solution for the immediate future.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Diamond pointed out the Civic Center may actually be in more serious jeopardy than the East Field complex. He said he felt the Common Council was actually hoping the County could offer its assistance with the Civic Center, rather than East Field, at the present time.

Mr. O'Connor stated, in his opinion, the County's Board of Supervisors would more likely be in favor of an East Field proposal, rather than the Civic Center. Mr. Thomas expressed his concern that the City may be trying to do too much, too fast. He suggested the City work on just one project at a time.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that the County constituents, and County Supervisors, looked upon East Field in a much more favorable light, than they did the Civic Center. The Committee urged Mayor Akins to obtain the quotations for the minimum repairs needed at East Field and report back to the Committee.

General discussion ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to authorize the request for Warren County's financial assistance to the City of Glens Falls for minimal repairs to the football stadium bleachers at the East Field facility; Mayor Akins to provide the estimated figures at the Warren County Finance Committee meeting on August 9, 2006.

Mayor Akins and Mr. Diamond extended their appreciation to the Committee members for the informative meeting.

Mr. O'Connor acknowledged the spirit of cooperation that was evident in the conversations held today.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Mason and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 3:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist